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ABSTRACT

This study examines the roles of teachers and citizens in decision-making related to curriculum planning and change. Interviews were conducted with persons involved in curriculum decision-making in 34 school districts in order to ascertain how they determined whether or not to make elementary-level curriculum changes. The rational and political aspects of this process were analyzed, as well as patterns of participation by teachers and laymen. The study revealed that a variety of curriculum change processes exist in these different districts. Both teacher and citizen participation has increased across the past few years, although citizens participate less frequently in curriculum decisions than teachers. The participation of both groups, however, has generally been superficial, and the major decisions are still usually made by higher authorities. The study also revealed that conflict tends to increase participation, to enhance rationality, and to democratize political aspects of curriculum change. Because both teachers and laymen have certain restrictions on the time and energy they can devote to decision-making, they should be provided with better mechanisms and forums for their involvement. (Author/DS)

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TEACHER AND LAY PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL CURRICULUM CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

by
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Topic and Methods of Study

A persistent theme in educational discourse is that participation in educational planning and decision-making should be broadened to include all persons who have a stake in the outcomes of the plans and decisions that are made. This theme, which has received heightened attention in the past decade,[1] is evident in the curriculum literature, particularly in discussions about local (school and district level) curriculum planning, development, decision-making, and change. Curriculum theorists have long stressed the desirability of increasing the involvement of those who somehow have a stake in the outcomes of change considerations but who have not enjoyed intensive, consistent, widespread participation or influence. In general, these theorists have claimed that curriculum work has been dominated by upper-level administrators and that two groups in particular, teachers and community members (including parents, of course), deserve more active and meaningful roles.[2]

In spite of this longstanding interest in participation in curriculum affairs and the popularity of exhortations to enhance teacher and lay involvement, there are few systematic empirical studies that provide reliable indications of the present state of such involvement. This paper reports the results of a study designed, in part, to begin alleviating that deficiency. The purposes of the full study were to describe the ways in which people in schools and districts go about considering whether or not to make elementary-level curriculum changes and to analyze three interrelated (but usually contrasted) aspects of the change consideration processes:

rational aspects, patterns of participation by teachers and laymen, and political aspects. This paper concentrates on the study's findings with respect to patterns of participation, giving attention to rational and political aspects only where they are closely intertwined with aspects of participation.

The study was carried out in a stratified random sample of 34 districts in a large metropolitan area. The districts were stratified by size, ranging from one-school rural districts to medium-sized suburban districts to larger urban districts. In each district in the sample I interviewed the two to four persons having the greatest responsibility for elementary-level curriculum matters and, in a subsample of three districts, I interviewed larger and more diversified samples of people who had participated in curriculum change considerations. Each interviewee was asked to address a standard set of open-ended questions about steps, variations, decisions, decision-makers, activities, information utilized, participants, roles, influence, and perceived problems in cases of curriculum change consideration with which the interviewee was familiar. More detailed probing questions were formulated and asked in the course of each interview. Interviewees were instructed to discuss representative samples of curriculum change considerations that varied in ways the interviewees considered most important and to strive for thoroughness within the representative cases selected for discussion.[3] Proceeding in this manner, my 76 interviewees discussed a total of 112 cases of curriculum change consideration in 31 different subject matter areas. Additional relevant data resulted from the Environment for Teaching Project's interviews

with the superintendents and 188 principals in the same 34 districts[4] and from examinations of state, district, and school demographic and budgetary documents.

Findings: Causes and Characteristics of Teacher and Lay Participation

One of the clearest lessons to emerge from this study is that cases of curriculum change at the local level are numerous, complex, and varied. Furthermore, many aspects of the local change consideration processes have been changing significantly during the past few years as a result of several developments and trends, including the popularization of the notion of "decentralization," legal changes such as new state laws which give local districts greater responsibility for selecting textbooks, changes in lay attitudes toward authority, responsibility, and participation, changes in some professional educators' attitudes, and increases in the frequency of controversial change considerations. In spite of these variations and changes, however, there are some apparent patterns in teachers' and laypersons' roles in curriculum change considerations, as summarized in this study's key conclusions:

- Teacher participation in local curriculum change considerations has increased during the past few years.
- The roles that teachers usually play, however, are not as central or meaningful as the teachers would like. The curriculum changes that teachers suggest are typically small in scale. Teachers' activities, such as program improvement and development, are often delimited by administrators' and board members' earlier decisions. And major decisions, such as decisions to adopt or reject suggested changes, are still usually made by higher authorities.

- Laypersons do not participate in curriculum change considerations as frequently or actively as do teachers and other professional educators, but lay participation in the initiation of change considerations, in debating suggested changes, and on advisory committees has increased in some cases and places over the past few years.

- Even when lay participation has increased, however, it is often superficial as, for example, when advisory groups are allowed only to give "rubber stamp" approval to professional educators' ideas and when laypersons' suggestions are later subverted by inconsistent follow-up activities by educators.

- But in those instances where laypersons demonstrate genuine, strong concern for changes that are being considered and a willingness to fight for their views, board members and educators tend to listen. In such cases, new procedures are frequently developed to facilitate lay involvement, laypersons' views often prevail, and laypersons sometimes remain involved through implementation of desired changes in order to ensure that their views are not subverted.

- Furthermore, in such cases, cases which one would expect to be most political and least rational in that they involve the most controversy and conflict, the change consideration processes often exhibit characteristics of democratic politics and pressures that tend to enhance, rather than detract from, rationality.

Before presenting support and explanations for these observations and conclusions, I should caution that most of this study's analyses do not, indeed cannot, draw upon comparisons of similar data collected at different points in time. That is, for example, I cannot compare frequencies of teacher change consideration activities in 1973 with those in 1968 or 1963. This is so simply because comparable data from earlier periods are not available. Most of my analyses in this paper involve interpretations of my own one-time data in light of (1) common theories, observations, and speculations and (2) explanations given by my interviewees. Thus, although I cannot present quantitative comparisons demonstrating that teachers participated in more curriculum change considerations in 1973 than they

did in 1963, I can argue that their participation rates exceed those predicted in the literature, that their rates relative to the rates of others (e.g., administrators) contradict earlier observations, and that there are logical reasons (e.g., changes in state laws, decentralization, pressures from teachers' and parents' organizations) for increases in the rates of teacher and lay participation--reasons that have been detailed and reaffirmed by an overwhelming majority of my 76 interviewees.

The first pertinent conclusion of this study, as mentioned above, is that teacher involvement in local curriculum change considerations has increased during the past few years. One indication of this increase is the information presented in Table 1, which shows that teachers initiated more of the 112 cases discussed by my interviewees than did any other single group. Groups of teachers (including faculties, committees, and ad hoc groups) suggested 19 of the 112 changes considered (17%) and individual teachers suggested 14 of the 112 changes considered (13%). Thus, just under one-third of all changes considered in these cases were initiated by teachers.

Another indication of increased teacher involvement in curriculum change considerations, or, at least, of people's perceptions of increased teacher involvement, comes from responses by 188 principals in the 34 districts in the sample to questions asked by the Environment for Teaching Project. In the project's Questionnaire, principals were asked to choose statements most accurately describing how decisions were made "to adopt a new major reading curriculum within this school" and "to develop a special course or unit not standard in the curriculum (such as ecology) within

Table 1

Distribution of Change Initiators in the 112 Cases Studied

Type of Initator	No. of Changes Suggested	(Per Cent) of Total)
Groups of Teachers (faculties, committees, or ad hoc groups)	19	(16%)
Groups of Parents	16	(14%)
State Department of Education	14	(13%)
Individual Teachers	14	(13%)
Curriculum Specialists	11	(10%)
Other District Administrators (excluding Superintendents)	8	(7%)
Superintendents	6	(5%)
Principals	6	(5%)
District-level Subject Area Committees	4	(4%)
Boards	4	(4%)
Publishers' Sales Representatives	3	(3%)
Individual Parents	2	(2%)
Other Community Groups (John Birch Society; a Chicano Community Group)	2	(2%)
District Nurses	2	(2%)
Groups of Principals	1	(1%)
	112	(100%)

this school." As Table 2 indicates, the 188 principals who were interviewed thought that teachers were most active in making these decisions, particularly when the decision concerned a "non-standard" course or unit. Teachers were involved 59.8% of the time in making decisions about "new major reading curricula" (26.6% of the time by themselves and 33.2% of the time in collaboration with principals) and 80.2% of the time in making decisions about "special courses or units not standard in the curriculum" (32.6% of the time by themselves and 47.6% of the time in collaboration with principals). It is interesting to note that these principals do not consider many of these decisions to be made by the district office. This finding conflicts with one view expressed consistently by my interviewees, that district administrators become involved when changes are major or involve new subject areas, but supports another common observation that changes affecting only one school are often considered only within the school itself.

My interviewees offered several reasons for the apparent increases in teachers' involvement in curriculum change consideration. The most commonly mentioned reasons were increased local autonomy resulting from a new state law designed to give local districts a stronger role in textbook selection, the popularity of the trend toward "decentralization" at all levels, and the pressures exerted by teachers' organizations, particularly unions. The new state law allows districts to select textbooks from matrices of recommended materials in whatever manner they please. Most of the districts in the sample involved teachers in these selections in one way or another, usually by including teacher representatives on the selection committees or by allowing individual schools to make the

Table 2

Principals' Views of the Ways in Which Curriculum Decisions Are Made

(Environment for Teaching Project Questionnaire Repsonses)

"Decision to adopt a new major reading curriculum"

Way in Which Decision is Made	No. of Responses	(Per Cent of Total)
Basically at the district level	25	(13.4%)
Basically by the principal	46	(24.6%)
Basically by teachers	50	(26.6%)
Shared equally between principal and teachers	62	(33.2%)
No decision has been made	4	(2.1%)
Total	187	(100.0%)

"Decision to develop a special course or unit not standard in the curriculum (such as ecology)"

Way in Which Decision is Made	No. of Responses	(Per Cent of Total)
Basically at the district level	10	(5.3%)
Basically by the principal	21	(11.2%)
Basically by teachers	61	(32.6%)
Shared equally between principal and teachers	89	(47.6%)
No decision has been made	6	(3.2%)
Total	187	(100.0%)

decisions because they (the districts) did not have the time nor manpower to do the work themselves. Others chose this procedure because they believed that "those who must implement the materials must also select them."

This common belief in the close relationship between participation, enthusiasm, commitment, and the effectiveness of implementation was frequently mentioned by my interviewees as a cause of "the decentralization movement." For example, the Curriculum Director in a suburban district of 23 schools said: "We know from experience that the most effective ideas originate with the people who are going to implement them. They care more about them and work harder to make them go. If a principal or other administrator tries to push an idea that is not supported by the teachers, it usually dies."

Although these views are voiced more frequently as the popularity of the notion of "decentralization" spreads, they are not shared by all administrators and they are not reflected in action in all districts. Thus, while interviewees in some districts spoke favorably of "innovators at the school level" and "the value of creative teachers," people in other districts complained about the "damn rabble rousers" and "boat rockers" in the schools. Each district has a general atmosphere and prevailing mood which most certainly affects attitudes toward change and the willingness of people to actively participate in change efforts. In some places, initiative and active involvement in change are rewarded; there is a "push to be ahead of everyone else," as one interviewee put it. In other places, "people get worn down by the constant resistance to change,

the inertia of the status quo," in the words of another interviewee. This rather nebulous characteristic (a district's general atmosphere and disposition toward change) seems to result from a variety of change incentives and disincentives, including the attitudes of significant actors (particularly Board members and the Superintendent) toward change in general; rewards and punishments for innovation; the existence or absence of funds for development or other curriculum activities; administrator's reactions to those who push for change; and the extent to which established procedures facilitate change or provide additional obstacles. The general atmospheric qualities of schools and districts present some difficult measurement problems, but they seem to influence change consideration processes quite strongly and are certainly worthy of more focused investigation.

Other district characteristics, such as size and wealth, also affect teacher involvement in curriculum work. Some of the data collected in this study support the expectation that wealthier districts are able to involve a larger number and diversity of professional staff in curriculum change considerations. 65 of the 112 cases were initiated by professionals or groups of professionals below the Superintendent. 47 of these 65 cases (72%) occurred in the 17 districts above the TCE (Total Current Expenses) median. Interviewees pointed out that richer districts are able to hire larger, more specialized, more capable staffs and can afford greater amounts of released time for other staff (e.g., teachers) to spend in curriculum change considerations. It should be noted, however, that the positive correlation between affluence and professional participation does not always hold true. Some relatively wealthy districts have surprisingly

passive teachers and a small number of lower-level administrators, all of whom expect the Board and upper-level administrators to take the initiative and carry out most of the consideration activities. Some relatively poor districts, on the other hand, are blessed with enthusiastic, dedicated (and often young) teachers who are unusually creative, who push for change, and who expect to be involved in change considerations whether they are compensated or not.

District size also seems to affect teacher participation in curriculum change considerations. Because smaller districts usually have smaller central staffs and find it easier to communicate with personnel in all of their schools, teacher participation tends to be higher in smaller districts, particularly in cases of district-level change considerations. It is interesting to note, however, that teacher participation seems to be increasing in some of the largest districts, particularly those that are experiencing shrinking budgets, smaller central staffs, decentralization, and, therefore, more change consideration at the school level.

Another trend that many interviewees considered important in increasing the teacher's role in curriculum change consideration was the popularization of "individualized instruction." "Curriculum materials are now chosen by teachers for individual students at the classroom level," said one interviewee. "The syllabus and standardized text are no longer in control." Another, a principal who had once worked as a curriculum specialist in the district office, outlined an evolution in his district: "A long time ago, the county office dictated the curriculum guides. Then, for a long time, the district office selected already-developed kits and materials. Now, with a greater stress on individualized instruction, the teachers are doing more of the development."

The degree of "specialized expertise" held by teachers, or the perceived degree of such expertise, also affects the amount of autonomy and participation administrators are willing to offer. For example, the teachers in one school I visited were given almost total freedom to choose the curriculum materials they used. Although the central staff had developed elaborate approval procedures for all other schools and closely monitored the other schools' curriculum selections and implementation practices, the staff regarded the teachers in this one school as "experts in special education" and, as a result, considered them most capable of choosing or developing materials most appropriate for their students. Each teacher received an annual budget and ordered whatever materials he pleased.

Finally, an increasingly powerful force for most active teacher participation in curriculum change consideration is the tendency of teachers' organizations to pay more attention to curriculum and instruction. After being widely criticized for concentrating almost entirely on "bread and butter" issues, such as salaries, for many years, many teachers' unions have started giving more emphasis to "substantive issues." One of the most common forms of such attention is to demand that the membership on curriculum committees be altered to include more teachers. As a result, teacher membership on curriculum committees had raisen sharply, sometimes dramatically, in many of the districts in this study's sample. In some cases, over 50% of the members of all curriculum committees were teachers.

In spite of all of these trends and apparent increases in teacher participation, however, there are indications that the overall figures may be deceptive. In some districts, at least, the increased activity is shared by only a small number of people. For example, an interviewee in

one district, which enjoys a wide reputation as an "innovative and democratic" district (as pointed out by interviewees in other districts), said: "You see the same people again and again. Only 10% of the teachers here, at most, care about curriculum change and decision-making. They're on all the committees, they make all the change suggestions, and they do all the work. The others just want to get home as early as possible."

Moreover, even if the amount of teacher participation in curriculum change consideration is increasing, the roles that the teachers play are still not as central and meaningful as they would like. For example, although teachers, as individuals and as groups, initiated more of the change considerations I examined than any other single group (see Table 1), most of the teachers' suggestions concerned relatively small-scale changes that did not involve significant deviations from the content of curricula already used. Thus, only 10 of the teachers' 33 initiations (30%) involved changes of a larger scale than supplementary textbooks or short units on subjects complementary to those already in the curriculum. Furthermore, as Table 3 shows, teachers made the final adoption/rejection decisions in only 14 of the 112 cases studied (13%). (Twelve were decisions by "individual schools as total entities;" one was by members of a School Curriculum Council; and one was by an initiating teacher.) They participated in 11 additional final decisions (as members of district-wide general elementary committees, district-wide subject area committees, or district-wide ad hoc committees), but in these cases they had only votes, as did other represented groups, not full decision-making authority.

Table 3

Distribution of Final Decision-Makers in the 112 Cases Studied

Decision-Makers	No. of Final Decisions Made	(Per Cent of Total)
Boards	45	(40%)
Individual Schools as total entities (e.g., faculty vote)	12	(11%)
No identifiable "final" decisions made (i.e., change simply implemented after development; or change simply died out without decision)	10	(9%)
Superintendents	9	(8%)
District-wide general curriculum committees (e.g., Elementary Curriculum Councils)	8	(7%)
District Administrators (other than Superintendents)	7	(6%)
Principals	5	(4%)
District-wide subject area committees	5	(4%)
District-level administrative committees (e.g., administrative councils)	3	(3%)
State Department of Education	3	(3%)
District-wide ad hoc committees	2	(2%)
School Curriculum Council	1	(1%)
Parent Advisory Groups	1	(1%)
Initiating teacher	1	(1%)
Total:	112	(110%)

Another common practice that tends to keep teachers busy in relatively minor curriculum matters and less involved in more important activities is the tendency of many districts to maintain central control of considerations concerning the largest changes affecting the most people and the largest proportion of the content covered in the curriculum. An Assistant Superintendent in one active, "progressive" district explained, for example, that while the district was encouraging as much development as possible in individual schools, the district still preferred to control and coordinate work in "big new areas such as career education, consumer education, values education, and instruction in the metric system." District offices also almost always control work related to state and federally funded programs. The announcements are sent to the district offices, decisions are typically made by central administrators or the Board, and district-appointed personnel, e.g., Special Programs Directors, carry out the required work. Teachers, serving on hastily-convened committees, are sometimes asked for ideas or approval, but such involvement is usually perfunctory.

Procedures for making textbook selections under the new state textbook adoption law provide another illustration of the ways in which many districts delimit the boundaries of teachers' influence while making the teachers feel more involved. Some districts in the sample had responded to the new law by having central curriculum committees make all selections, some had subject area committees make the selections, only a few allowed each school to choose from the full state list, and most allowed each school to select from a much smaller list of two to four "instructional systems" that had been selected from the state list by a central district

committee. One Curriculum Director expressed the usual rationale for this process when he explained that "we have to allow for the individual needs of each school, but at the same time we have to make sure that there is continuity across grade levels and across schools." The result, in the eyes of many teachers and principals, is a "charade": "They (the district administrators) tell us we can choose whatever we want from the list they give us," complained one teacher. "But the three things on the list are almost identical -- the same content and the same approaches."

Many of the district administrators I interviewed seemed torn between their desires to "give the schools more autonomy" (a phrase I heard repeatedly) and their worries about the dangers of "segmentation," "arbitrary adoption," "chaos," and "lack of coordination." These conflicting dangers and desires, which are almost universal, are handled in most districts by allowing the schools to make decisions and carry out development within boundaries established by district policies, goals, and "philosophies of education." Thus, while prevalent values (freedom, individuality, democracy, etc.) prevent school districts from exercising total control over all curriculum decisions and actions, realistic problems (e.g., the absence of adequate decision-making resources in most schools, provincialism, high population mobility rates) make laissez faire relationships unacceptable to most administrators and Board members. Hence, some degree of district control over schools and individuals, usually through the establishment of guiding policies and boundaries, is inevitable. While the desirability of this situation may be debated, it clearly does place limitations on the power and influence of individuals below the district level, including teachers.

Another reason frequently given for delimiting teachers' decision-making powers with superordinate policies is the common belief that, in the words of one interviewee, "the community, usually through its representatives on the Board, should decide what to teach and the professional educators should decide how to teach what the community wants taught. The community should decide on the overall goals of education and the educators should develop sub-objectives and learning experiences within those areas. After all, it is their (the parents') kids and their (the taxpayers') money." While this popular belief is not always reflected in practice, it often does provide district administrators with a rationale for restricting teachers' realms of influence.

Finally, teachers' roles in development and change consideration are often meaningless because many administrators do not believe that teachers really want to do much of the work. "Sure, they (the teachers) sometimes won't use things unless they feel they've been involved," said one Director of Elementary Education. "But that is all that really matters--feeling involved. We bring them in and show them what is going on, let them make a few small decisions, and let them try out and react to new things. But that makes them happy. They don't want to do a lot of work."

Many of the forces which have been affecting the amounts and types of teacher participation in curriculum change considerations have been influencing lay participation as well. In general, the results have been similar to those experienced by teachers: laymen have been spending more time in change consideration activities than they have traditionally (although they still spend much less time than do professional educators), but much of this time is devoted to relatively meaningless, often ceremonial roles.

The strongest forces for increased lay participation have been the growing popularity of the notion of decentralization at all levels, the related belief in the value of "grass roots" initiation, involvement, and decision-making, the professed view of many Board members and administrators that the lay community should set general goals and directions to be followed by the professional educators, reductions in the awe many laymen once held for "professional expertise", concomitant reductions in lay reluctance to express views, and state and federal mandates that certain programs include Parent Advisory Groups. One interviewee talked at some length about the "growing climate of social activism," which, in her view, had made it "easier and more acceptable to get involved." "Parents feel more strongly about things now than they used to," she explained. "They've been mad about some of the new subject matter, such as sex education, human relations, and Communism, they've been mad about teachers' increasing use of the 'labor model' (i.e., the use of strikes and the power of unions), and they've come to see that they have as much right to speak up as we (the professional educators) do."

Some aspects of the cases of curriculum change consideration examined in this study provide evidence of the impact of some of these forces on lay participation. As Table 1 shows, for example, laymen played some part in initiating 24 of the 112 changes that were considered (21%). Groups of parents initiated 16 change considerations (second only to groups of teachers), Boards initiated 4, individual parents initiated two, and other community groups (the John Birch Society and a Chicano group) initiated two. More impressively, at first glance, laypersons participated

in making final adoption/rejection decisions in 46 of the 112 cases (41%). (See Table 3) Boards officially made 45 such decisions, while a Parent Advisory Group made one. In interpreting these figures, however, it should be remembered that Boards often give quick, superficial attention to the issues at hand, and in a great majority of the cases discussed by my interviewees the Board merely gave "a stamp of approval" to administrators' recommendations.

Additional evidence of increased lay involvement is provided in Table 4, which shows that parents and other community members played roles of some sort in 43 of the 112 cases (38%). While this level of involvement is certainly well below that of professional educators, who participated in all cases in one way or another, it does seem to represent an improvement over the "minimal" lay role of the past (Kirst and Walker, 1971 , p. 499). Furthermore, the relatively heavy concentrations of activity in requesting or complaining about programs and in debating suggested changes seem to support my interviewees'portrayal of increased "social activism."

Although the level of lay involvement in curriculum change considerations seem to be rising overall, participation rates vary substantially by district. Interviewees consistently claimed that lay participation and the care with which changes are considered are heightened by high levels of socio-economic status, educational attainment, aspirations for children's achievement, and desire for strong educational programs and by positive, "progressive" attitudes toward lay roles and professional-lay relationships. According to the interviewees, characteristics such as these lead to increased lay interest and attention, force closely-

Table 4

Roles Played by Parents and Community Groups in the 112 Cases Studied

Type of Role	No. of Cases	(Per Cent of Total)
No lay participation	69	(62%)
Lay Participation of Some Sort [5]	43	(38%)
. suggested curriculum change	(20)	(18%)
. participated in debate at Board or committee meetings	(15)	(13%)
. participated in program planning groups	(11)	(10%)
. served on advisory board	(9)	(8%)
. responded to needs assessment	(8)	(7%)
. responded to survey	(6)	(5%)
. were informally consulted about opinions	(3)	(3%)

watched educators to explain and justify changes they wish to make (and, in some cases, needed changes they are failing to consider), and often contribute to higher rates of change, particularly in areas where liberal, "progressive" parents are dissatisfied with the present curriculum. Greater interest and conviction can also heighten levels of conflict, especially in politically heterogeneous communities where clashes among concerned laymen with divergent viewpoints are sometimes inevitable.

Another district characteristic that affects rates of lay participation is wealth. This relationship obtains, I suspect, largely because wealth correlates with other influential community characteristics such as level of educational attainment and aspirations. 41 of the 69 cases that involved no lay participation whatsoever (63%) took place in the districts below the TCE (Total Current Expenses) median for the sample as a whole; 33 of the 43 cases having lay participation of some sort (73%) took place in the districts above the median. Of course, this general tendency also varies by district. While the parents in some affluent districts are very interested in influencing the education being offered to their children and take active roles in change considerations, parents in other wealthy areas seem confident that their districts have hired competent, reliable professionals and are willing to leave most change consideration responsibilities to the educators. Similarly, while parents in some relatively poor areas (particularly rural areas) do not have the time, interest, or confidence to assume active roles, feel unqualified to discuss educational matters, and more commonly subscribe to the "traditional belief that education should be run by the educators," parents in other poor areas (particularly urban) are less hesitant to take part.

In short, lay involvement in curriculum change considerations is not substantial in all districts and, even where it is high or increasing, there are often problems with the ways in which laypersons take part or are allowed to take part. Parents and community members rarely participate in the actual development of curricular materials and they rarely make the important decisions, such as whether to adopt or reject a considered change. Parent advisory groups rarely have veto power and often do little more than provide required, "rubber stamp" approval to educators' plans.

Another factor that reduces laymen's opportunities to play influential roles is the typical timing of their involvement. Laymen usually take part very early, when general goals and directions are being established, or very late, when most of the preparation of suggested changes has been completed. When laymen enter change considerations during the late stages, they are almost always in the position of reacting to others' ideas, rather than initiating their own. This role is common for laymen, as professional educators are exposed to many more change ideas and have more opportunities for suggesting change. Most sources of change ideas, such as workshops, "innovation fairs," journals, visits to other schools, and so on, are addressed to educators or involve educators much more frequently than laymen.

There are at least three aspects of late entry that detract from laymen's influence and from the meaningfulness of their roles. First, those who have the most influence over the nature of the changes that are considered are those who initiate them and those who shape their contents during curriculum preparation activities. When laymen do initiate changes, their suggestions are usually unfocused or negative ones--suggestions to

drop rather than adopt and suggestions that are so broad that much additional specification is required. Thus, laymen rarely do much to shape the particular contents of specific curriculum changes. The second problem with late entry is that those who have not been involved all along in the shaping of a change have little or no commitment or feeling of "ownership." And, third, those who have been involved all along, typically professional educators, have built up such commitment, feeling of ownership, and "ego-involvement." Therefore, the educators are often resistant to last-minute changes and become angered by laymen's "eleventh hour" attempts to "undermine their hard work."

The greatest danger of early participation that is not followed by continued lay involvement in the shaping of changes being considered is the tendency of educators to "subvert" laymen's wishes and decisions. A popular approach in many districts is to involve parents in the creation of a district "philosophy" and set of general goals and to instruct educators to work within the broad boundaries thus provided. In many places where this is done, however, the resulting boundaries are so vague (e.g., "children should feel good about themselves") that educators can still do almost anything they please. Moreover, in many cases no one assumes the responsibility for checking to ensure that the educators are honoring the general goals. Hence, the activities of educators in the late stages of curriculum change consideration often nullify the earlier decisions of laymen.

An additional detriment to lay influence over the content of the curriculum in the districts in my sample was the almost universal failure

to involve laymen in the selection of state-recommended textbooks. In discussing new selection arrangements and procedures established as a result of the new state textbook selection law, not one of my interviewees mentioned provisions for lay participation. Typically the central issue was whether to use central committees having school representatives or whether to let individual schools make their own selections. The main problem with excluding laymen from these processes is that, while the selection of "instructional systems" from state-recommended matrices may not be a very exciting activity, the texts chosen in this way still constitute most of the curriculum materials used in most districts and almost all of the materials used in some of the poorer districts that cannot afford anything else. Thus, laymen are totally divorced from these decisions which determine far more of what is taught than do countless numbers of more exciting change consideration cases in which they do take part.

In spite of these numerous obstacles to meaningful lay involvement in the consideration of curriculum change, there are occasions in which laymen become so concerned about changes that have been suggested or changes that they think are needed that they demonstrate their willingness to fight vehemently for their views. And, in such cases, Board members and administrators usually listen carefully and the laymen usually prevail. Information derived from the cases discussed in my interviews tends to support the generalization that laymen can be influential when they genuinely care. Nineteen of the 112 cases involved distinguishable, significant conflicts between opposing factions. Lay groups were among the "winning" factions in 14 of these cases, while lay groups "lost" in only 6 cases.[6]

Moreover, the "losers" in three of these cases were groups such as the John Birch Society, which had developed reputations as "persistent opponents of almost everything," as one interviewee put it. Several interviewees observed that Board members are influenced by the size, degree of intensity, and composition of lay groups that choose to take sides on an issue: large groups of normally quiet parents tend to be heard while small, radical groups that are persistently vocal tend to be ignored.

Lay concern can also affect the nature of the change consideration processes themselves, including political and rational aspects, which served as the other two analytical focuses for the larger study on which this paper is based. In general, the larger study's analyses of the political aspects of local curriculum change considerations indicated that most cases of change consideration discussed by interviewees were not dominated by the "low profile politics" and "overt political interaction" that Kirst and Walker (1971) predicted would result from the absence of quantitative decision techniques and objective data. In many cases, particularly at the elementary level, most people did not care very much about the changes that were being made, decisions were made without much conflict, care, or concern, and, in some instances, changes occured in the absence of any clear-cut, identifiable decisions. There were cases, of course, in which conflict arose and people concentrated less on objective decision-making and more on the exertion of influence and pressure, persuasion, behind-the-scenes "wheeling and dealing," and other more traditional political tactics. But, in the cases that one would have expected to be most political, i.e., those involving the most widespread participation, concern, and conflict, the change consideration processes were often political in a democratic sense, rather than an oligarchical sense. That is, because so many people

cared so much about the decisions that were being made and about the ways in which the decisions were being made, the administrators and Board members were forced to open their meetings to the public, ensure that all concerned parties had opportunities to express their views, clarify the criteria and procedures to be used in making decisions, and base decisions upon as much defensible evidence as possible.

Heightened lay concern and participation exhibited similar effects on the rational aspects of curriculum change considerations. In most cases, the participants did not follow many of the theorists' guidelines for rationality. That is, they did not always clearly define the problem to be solved; they rarely sought evidence for their problem's existence; they sometimes searched for alternative programs, but such searches were usually haphazard; they rarely considered the implications of all alternatives; they sometimes searched for evidence of program effectiveness, but these searches were haphazard also and almost never included assessments of the adequacy of the evidence obtained; they often moved inconsistently from premises to evidence, to arguments, and to conclusions; they usually failed to explicate or use clear criteria; the procedures they followed were only ocasionally specified in advance; and the procedures that were prespecified were usually incomplete, used irregularly, or applied inflexibly and inappropriately. However, in the relatively infrequent cases where laypersons demonstrated a willingness to participate, performance against these criteria for rationality was improved. In those cases where many people were genuinely concerned about the outcome, opposing factions fought to ensure that their views were heard and challenged opponents' views by demanding objective

evidence rather than mere opinion. These pressures tended to force administrators and Board members to create opportunities for all points of view to be expressed, to consider more alternatives more thoroughly, to search for and utilize more evidence, to more carefully assess the adequacy of such evidence, to clarify the criteria and procedures to be used in making decisions, and to base decisions upon as much defensible evidence as possible. In these cases, then, the curriculum change consideration processes were high on all three aspects of this study's analysis: teachers and laymen actively participated, the processes were political in a democratic sense, and rationality was enhanced.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Interest in broadening participation in curriculum affairs remains high, as evidenced in much of the recent literature, including the January 1976 NIE Curriculum Development Task Force survey, which suggests that "...the current over-riding interest on the part of a wide array of individuals and groups is to have a piece of the action at all levels of curriculum decision-making." The study reported in this present paper indicates that this sustained interest has led to generally higher levels of involvement by teachers and laymen in local curriculum change considerations. However, the study has also demonstrated that, while teachers and laymen may be spending more time in curriculum change considerations, their roles are often superficial. More meaningful roles are usually apparent in only the most controversial cases, cases in which laymen or teachers demonstrate such genuine concern for changes that are being considered and such strong willingness to fight for their views that new procedures are developed to

facilitate their involvement, they remain involved throughout the entire change consideration process, Board members and administrators tend to listen to them more carefully, and the laymen's or teachers' views often prevail.

This finding is significant because it suggests that controversy and conflict in curriculum change consideration tend to increase and widen participation, to enhance rationality, and to democratize the political elements of the change consideration processes. Thus, more intensive study of such circumstances would seem to hold promise for revealing ways of improving the processes through which curriculum changes are considered. However, it must also be remembered that controversy and conflict have severe limitations as "interventions" for achieving desired results.

The most crucial and obvious limitation to controversy and conflict as intentional interventions is that it would be unethical, and often impossible, to stimulate them when they do not arise naturally and spontaneously. Those who desire greater rationality and wider participation in the consideration of curriculum changes cannot connive to make people opposed to one another, to stir up unnecessary conflict. If people do not become concerned about curriculum changes of their own volition, educators must find honest, ethical ways of demonstrating why they should pay attention. And, of course, if there are no good reasons for people to use valuable time in considering particular curriculum changes, if the changes are not as important as competing issues and activities, it would be unethical to force or trick people into wasting their time on them.

The other major shortcoming of controversy and conflict as stimulators of participation and rationality is that their beneficial effects tend to disappear, sometimes rather quickly, when the conflict has ended. People who become interested in curriculum change during exciting and particularly significant controversies often lose interest when attention returns to the more usual, routine, and sometimes mundane, change considerations. They do not view most curriculum changes as especially powerful determinants of educational outcomes and begin to judge other activities and issues as more useful investments of their time and attention.

The tendency to return to the status quo in the wake of conflict is strengthened by administrators and Board members who do not want conflict or heavy involvement by all groups at all times. Many of these people, who are responsible for coordinating the change consideration process and who are in a position to attempt to sustain interest, respond to the effects of controversial cases with actions designed to reduce, rather than sustain or further enhance, the newfound enthusiasm and desire to participate. They try to squelch all suggestions that are potentially controversial, regardless of possible value. They send up "trial balloons" and confer with influential lay and teacher leaders early in order to detect ideas that would meet resistance. And they establish and implement formal procedures which are designed to sustain participation and rationality but which become so routinized, formalized, and addressed to such sterile issues that the sustained interest of most groups is unlikely.

This observation supports Zeigler's (1975, 1974a, 1974b) finding that administrators utilize their technical expertise to routinize, "technocratize", and monopolize educational policy-making, particularly in areas such as

curriculum, which are commonly viewed as requiring such expertise. However, the study reported here also points to an even more pervasive and powerful obstacle to sustained meaningful involvement in curriculum change considerations by laymen and teachers: the inevitable limitations in their time, energies, and interest. Thus, although these groups seem to desire more active, meaningful involvement, they are invariably faced with more possibilities--both in and out of education and, within education, both in and out of curriculum matters--than they can take on and, as a result, they are constantly having to decide where to place their time and energies. Hence, curriculum matters, especially those that are not viewed as particularly consequential, do not always receive much attention from laymen and teachers, who must necessarily turn over much of the responsibility to administrators and Board members.

One of the most important implications of this conclusion is that those who wish to enhance teacher and lay influence over curriculum change considerations should look for ways to improve the timing and nature of their involvement, rather than simply trying to heighten the overall amounts of their participation. One requirement for such improvements is to provide better mechanisms and forums for their involvement. These improved mechanisms and forums should provide continuous opportunities for laymen and teachers to participate whenever they have the time and interest. Also, they should facilitate participation rather than creating new obstacles and making unnecessary additional demands. Teacher and lay participation in curriculum change considerations should be easier, less time-consuming, and more productive than it has been in the past. This

will require some modifications in lay and professional roles and in the relationships between laymen and professional educators. Laymen should be involved, at the very least, at formal "checkpoints" where crucial activities and decisions occur throughout the entire process of change consideration. Professional educators, including teachers who have the time and interest, should be responsible for carrying out all of the groundwork and background work that lead into key decision points and all of the follow-up work that results from decisions in which laymen participate. Thus, for example, once all participants had agreed that a particular type of change was to be considered, the educators would be responsible for conducting searches for available programs and materials, providing useful summary descriptions of relevant programs that they find, searching for relevant research and evaluation evidence, talking with others who had developed or used programs under consideration, preparing succinct, useful presentations of the results of such investigations, and so on. All of these activities by professionals would be designed to facilitate the involvement of laymen and teachers having less time, who would come in at key junctures and decision points, when a great deal of pertinent information would be made readily available to them in a manageable form.

Finally, the junctures and decision points for such involvement should be distributed across all stages of curriculum change considerations. As the earlier analyses of participation patterns showed, laymen, and sometimes teachers, are often involved only very early or only very late. When they are involved only very early, the broad guidelines that they help establish and the general decisions they help make are often subverted by others at later stages. When they are involved only very late, they are in the position of reacting to other people's ideas, plans, and developed programs

and it is usually too late to have much influence over such ideas, plans, and programs. Furthermore, those who have invested much time in consideration and development are usually so committed to their programs by the later stages that they resist "outside intrusion" and "eleventh hour" attempts at change. These criticisms are made in spite of the fact that the "intruders" have had no opportunities to participate at earlier stages, and, in many cases, have had no knowledge of the change consideration that was in progress. Selective, well-planned, and well-prepared involvement of laymen and teachers at all stages of change consideration might help to alleviate these problems.

Notes

1. Continuing concern about participation in educational decision-making was clearly demonstrated in a recent survey by the NIE Curriculum Development Task Force. The Task Force asked representatives of over sixty professional and lay organizations what they considered to be the most important current issues, problems, and concerns in curriculum development. In reporting the results of this survey (NIE Curriculum Development Task Force, 1976), the Task Force concluded that the overriding interest on the part of a wide array of individuals and groups is in being involved at all levels of curriculum decision-making. "While individuals and groups often have strong views on what should and should not be emphasized in school programs," the report states, "concern for 'who should make curricular decisions?' appears to take priority over the question 'what shall be taught?'"

2. See, for example, Saylor and Alexander (1974); Neagley and Evans (1967); Doll (1970); Oliver (1969); Cay (1966); and Leese, Frasure, and Johnson (1961).

3. Greater detail about research methodology and all other aspects of this study may be obtained by consulting the full report: Jon Schaffarzick, "The Consideration of Curriculum Change at the Local Level," Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1975. Microfilm and hardbound copies are available from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

4. The author was employed as a half-time Research Assistant by the Environment for Teaching Project, at the Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching, during the data-gathering phase of this study.

5. The total number of roles played (72) exceeds the number of cases in which parents and community members participated (43) because these groups assumed more than one role in some cases.

6. The total number of lay "wins" and "losses" exceed the total number of conflicts because two cases involved more than one lay group (on opposite sides) and one case involved no lay groups.

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